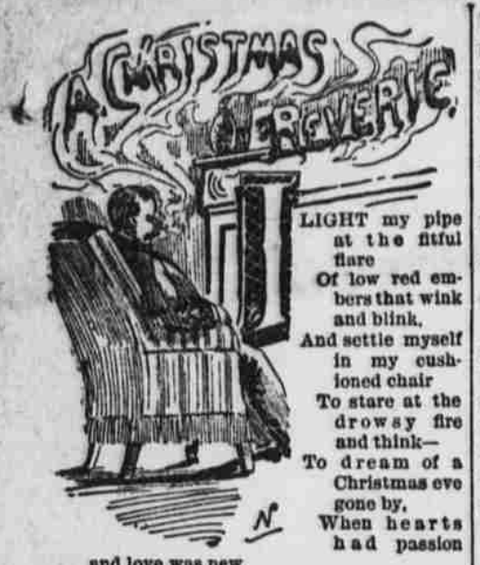


LIGHT my pipe at the fitful flare
Of low red embers that wink and blink,
And settle myself in my cushioned chair
To stare at the drowsy fire and think—
To dream of a Christmas eve gone by,
When hearts had passion and love was new,
And stars shone bright in youth's cloudless sky
And all life's visions were sweet and true.

Alone in the fire-light—quite alone.
The clock ticks on with its clear refrain,
And high on the ceiling the shadows thrown
Crowd like the phantoms that haunt my brain,
Change and waver and fade, until
Swift, sudden flames for a moment start,
And the room is bright with the self-same thrill
That stirs the depths of my dreaming heart.

How fair she was in the Christmas light
That swept out over the whirling snow,
As the sleighs drew near through the stormy night
To the friendly threshold and ruddy glow.
With smile of welcome and outstretched hand,
The snow-flakes kissing her soft brown hair,
In the open door-way I saw her stand,
And my heart kneeled down to her then and there.

Can there ever come to this life of mine
A time when the burden of days and years
Shall hide and shadow this dream divine
That was born in laughter and grew in tears?
When I shall remember, no more, no more,
That Christmas eve when our eyes first met,
And I envied the snow-flakes drifting o'er
Her silky braids where a rose was set?

We loved, yet the grief of parting came;
Mad jealousy broke love's charmed spell!
I know not now which was most to blame,
Her pride or mine; but it's just as well;
For we made it up and are lovers still!
And I'm sitting here in the fire-light's glow
Since she stole upstairs with some toys, to fill
Three stockings, hung in a waiting row.

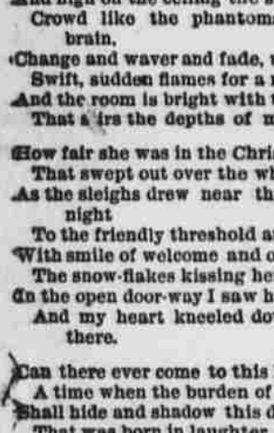
—Madeline S. Bridges, in Judge.

THE GAME-KEEPER.

A Christmas Estrangement and Reconciliation.

[Written for This Paper.]

CHAPTER I.



MAGNIFICENT Christmas eve ball was in progress at Colonel Van Arman's. It was easy for the beholder to accept as genuine the most extravagant popular estimates of the Colonel's wealth, while looking at the splendor of the scene. Within there was a picture of light and luxury that made the old feel young again to see. The broad hallway with its polished floor was dotted here and there with tired dancers whose faces shone in the glimmer cast by the pile of blazing oak logs on the hearth.

Colonel and Mrs. Van Arman, with smiles chasing themselves over their homely but genial features, stood watching the brilliant scene. The Colonel was a self-made man, and to-night he was happy. This, he knew, was the most magnificent social event that had ever been known in Armanville. And, as he watched his dear and only daughter, Mildred, gliding by in the embrace of her almost officially-recognized lover, young Eustace Mordaunt, he felt certain that he was the father of the handsomest girl in the county. Most of us, too, would have agreed with him. Mildred was one of those tiny, symmetrical beauties, with ripe, coy lips, eyes the color of ripe hazel-nuts and form that seemed to have been fashioned by fairies for the sole purpose of distracting the masculine mind. Her face was as demure as a milkmaid's, but the glance she threw upwards into her partner's eyes at intervals constituted excellent evidence as to the trend her affections had taken. So Colonel and Mrs. Van Arman looked on and smiled and were satisfied.

As the waltz came to an end, the gilded clock on the mantle chimed twelve. "Now Eustace," cried Mildred, "you must sing for us."

"Gladly will I," responded the young man, his face flushed with love and enthusiasm. "I will sing you a Christmas song. Colonel Van Arman, may I beg you to have the lights turned low?"

At a sign from the Colonel a couple of flunkeys sprang to the doorway and the electric chandeliers were almost extinguished. Stepping forward, Mordaunt threw aside two wide portieres and the light of the midnight moon came streaming in through the windows. For the instant that he stood there, silent, as a friend struck some opening chords on the grand piano in the corner, the revellers had a chance to observe the man on whom the heiress to the Van Arman millions was supposed to have bestowed her affections.

Tall, straight as an arrow, was he, with sturdy, well-knit limbs and a face at once handsome and resolute. Such a face as is worn by a man of iron will, but with soft lines about the mouth that betokened a sunny, happy temperament. His shapely head was thrown back a little and his broad chest expanded as he commenced to sing, in a ringing, resonant tenor, Adams' deathless "Cantique de Noel:"

"O, holy Night! The stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth!
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till He appeared, and the world knew His worth.
In grateful song, our joyous anthems raise we,
For yonder breaks a pure and glorious light.
Fall on your knees! Now hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!"

As the verse ended the revellers stood spellbound. Every one who has heard that noble song knows its power. The moonlight, streaming in, surrounded the athletic form of the singer with a silver cloud. There were tears in Colonel Van Arman's eyes, and in his wife's also, as Mordaunt went on:

"He it was who taught us to love one another;
His word is law and His Gospel is Peace.
Chains shall He break; the slave is our brother;
And at His name all oppression shall cease."

And so on to the end. The climax of the song, as written for a tenor, strikes B flat, and Mordaunt took the note superbly, as a Brignoli or Tamagno might have done. Its beauty and the sentiment of the exquisite hymn electrified his hearers. There were many

"IT WAS ALL FOR YOU," HE ANSWERED.

there who had heard him sing before, but they whispered to one another that he had never sung as he had to-night.

"Oh, Eustace, how gloriously you sang," ejaculated Mildred, when she caught him for a moment alone.

"It was all for you," he answered, passionately. "Meet me in half an hour in the conservatory, in the corner by the fountain. I have something to tell you, Mildred. I must—"

At that instant Colonel Van Arman appeared. "Eustace, my boy," he said, huskily, blowing his nose vigorously with a silk handkerchief that he rescued from the capacious folds of his vest for the purpose, "you sing better and better every day."

Half an hour after that Mordaunt was stealing towards the conservatory. Another waltz was in progress and his absence from the ball-room was not noticed. He neared the appointed spot, and started back, thunderstruck with what he saw and heard.

Mildred half stood, half knelt on a low seat by the fountain. Her cheek was pressed close against a wall of flowers behind which, at opposite angles, Eustace knew there was another nook, the precise counterpart of the one she occupied. She was speaking:

"My own, precious pet," he heard her murmur, in impassioned accents, "my darling old Tom! You know I love you, but you really must be quiet and run away now. For Eustace is coming, you know, and he is going to tell me *he* loves me, too. He must not see you, or he would be jealous."

A bitter imprecation fell from the young man's lips. He could not see the other face behind the flowers. He stood irresolute for a moment, as though in doubt whether to spring at his unknown rival's throat, but the next moment turned and with another oath left the place.

CHAPTER II.

During the ensuing eighteen months Mr. Eustace Mordaunt saw pretty much all of Europe. Being possessed of a small independence, for which he was indebted to the timely decease of a maiden aunt, he had the means at his disposal to gratify his whim for travel. But continuous travel is bound to grow stale after a certain time, especially if one has a well-defined sorrow, that the flight of months can not rob of its piquancy, gnawing at his vitals; so it came to pass that the young man, as he sat, solitary, in his rooms at the Metropole in London one gloomy October afternoon, found himself very much at a loss where to go next. Of continuous touring he was heartily tired. A return to America was not to be thought of. As he glanced idly over the columns of the Daily Telegraph, his eye lighted upon a certain advertisement. He threw himself back in his arm-chair, gazed dreamily into the fire and said, half aloud: "Why not? It would be a novelty, any way."

The early afternoon of the following day found the American alighting from a train at a little wayside station in Kent. He looked rather distinguished in a long ulster, buttoned closely up to his throat, and the station-master touched his hat respectfully as the stranger came forward and inquired the way to the Marquis of Sansdowne's.

"If you were expected at the manor, sir," he said, "there is sure to be a carriage here presently."

"I'm not expected," answered Eustace, "and I'd much rather walk."

He was informed as to the way, and started off at a swinging gait. He covered the four miles in less than an hour, and duly presented himself at the big, gloomy pile of gray stone that was the home of the Marquis. The flunkey who opened the door smirked as he admitted the handsome visitor, and remarked: "You 'ave made a mistoik, sir; this is the servants' hentrance."

"It was the servants' hentrance that I wanted," answered Eustace. "Please tell his lordship I should like to see him at once."

The man led the way to the big hallway, where big antlered heads looked down from the walls, and guns and fishing-rods hung on large racks. Presently the flunkey came and ushered the visitor into the library, where sat the Marquis.

Eustace had expected to see a grim old man, stately of demeanor and haughty in appearance. Instead of that, there arose to meet him a young man of thirty or thereabouts, clad in shooting corduroys, with broad shoulders and a frank, healthy, red face.

"I have called, your lordship," announced Mordaunt, drawing off his brick-colored kids, "to endeavor to secure the position of assistant game-keeper, which you advertised yesterday."

The Marquis stared. "You what?" said he, eyeing his well-bred-looking visitor from head to foot.

"Don't be astonished," answered the young man, carelessly, but with respect. "It is true I am a gentleman, as you evidently perceive, but I want the place. I must have employment. I am honest, healthy and will serve you well. I know all about grouse and pheasants, and think your lordship will find my services valuable."

After further conversation, which it is unnecessary to repeat, the Marquis rose, walked into the hall, took down a couple of breech-loaders from a rack, handed one to Eustace, and the two walked down a pathway into the woods. When they returned Eustace was carrying four birds in a bag, and the two looked as though they enjoyed each other's company.

The head keeper, an old man of nearly seventy, was a mere figure-head, and the work fell mostly on Eustace and the grooms, of whom there were several. Eustace lived in the little shooting lodge, nearly two miles from the manor, in the heart of the beech woods. The members of the shooting parties given by his lordship invariably expressed curiosity on the subject of the new keeper. To inquiries the Marquis made answer that he knew nothing of the young man except that he was the best game-keeper he ever had on his preserves. Mordaunt's manner towards the ladies and gentlemen who visited the manor was that of undeviating respect and courtesy. His breeding was apparent at a glance. The Marquis' cousin, a healthy country girl of seventeen, once remarked in his hearing on the smallness and whiteness of his hands, whereupon he blushed deeply and moved out of sight.

Time and again the Marquis besought his keeper, to whom he had taken a great liking (for which Mordaunt's abilities as a sportsman were perhaps partially responsible), to quit his menial position and become his private secretary. The American's invariable reply was that he liked his position and would keep it as long as his lordship allowed him to do so.

Then came a tragic night. Poachers were abroad and the Marquis of Sansdowne, returning late at night through his grounds from a neighbor's, tried to capture two of them single-handed. He was felled to the ground with a bludgeon and might have perished then and there had not Eustace Mordaunt came stalking through the moonlit glade with his fowling-piece over his shoulder. One poacher fled. The other, as he stood over the prostrate Marquis, preparing to strike another blow, received a charge of bird shot in the thigh. He responded with a pistol shot that stretched the American on the dewy sward, and then limped away.

It was six weeks before Eustace left his bed. During his period of captivity the Marquis' cousin, the blue-eyed lady Edith, trotted down to the lodge every day with some delicacy to tempt his palate. The Marquis was not jealous. Perhaps he rightfully interpreted her charity as gratitude for his own salvation. When Eustace began to prowl about the grounds again, pale and thin, work was out of the question. When his employer asked him one day if there was any thing he wished for he blushed and hesitated.

"What is it, man? Speak out," said the Englishman, heartily.

"While I am idle all day," answered the American, 'I should like to have a piano down at the lodge, if your lordship would permit me to send to London for it."

The Marquis raised his eyebrows in astonishment.

"You are a musician as well as a gentleman, then," said he.

"Only an amateur," responded Eustace, modestly; "but all exiles love music, and I am an exile, you know."

The next day four grooms came down to the lodge with an instrument that had formerly graced the Marquis' drawing-room. And after that the woods re-echoed with the melody that was poured into them.

Prior to this Eustace had kept his tenor a secret. In his illness, however, something of his old heart ache came back to him, and he sang as he did in the old days. Of course the Marquis heard of it. He came down to the lodge and was enraptured, but the American resisted all his employer's entreaties to come up and sing for the guests at the manor. The game-keeper was stubborn on this point. He knew his place, he said, and would keep it.

Sometimes, however, the Marquis and his cousin would stop in their moonlight walks under the eccentric keeper's window and listen to the songs that were carolled out into the frosty night.

The Christmas season drew on and there was a typical English house party up at the manor. There were noblemen and their families from distant counties, statesmen from London and some foreigners of note, including an American beauty or two who had lately realized the ambition of their lives by being presented at court. For a week all was light, laughter and gayety.

With Christmas eve came frost—hard, honest frost, that covered the cute little artificial lake in the woods with three solid inches of ice. A moonlight skating party was a delicious novelty, and every guest at the manor was delighted at their host's proposal to have one. For four hours the ghostly figures,—the ladies well clad in furs—glided over the surface, and then the ice was deserted and host and guest started homeward over the frozen turf.

Very ghostly looked the frost-laden branches in the moonlight. It lacked two minutes of midnight when the party of pedestrians stopped, thunderstruck. Out of the silence came ringing the notes of a superb tenor. The sound seemed to spring out of the trees. Like a bugle call they rang forth, loud, clear and sweet. The wayfarers were under the windows of the keeper's lodge. Their footfalls made no sound on the frozen sod, and all stayed to listen. The singer was in the midst of the imperishable Cantique de Noel:

"He it was who taught us to love one another;
His word is law and His gospel is peace,
Chains shall He break; the slave is our brother,
And at His word all oppression shall cease.
Fall on your knees!
Now hear the Heavenly voices!
O! Night Divine!
O! Night when Christ was born!"

As the last wonderful notes—that same B flat was among them—went eddying forth, the singer left the piano and came to the window. As he stood there for an instant the watchers below saw a tall young man whose pale face looked wan and emaciated in the flood of moonlight leaning against the casement. And at that instant one of the American Beauties dropped her tiny skates to the ground with a clatter, gasping out: "Eustace! Eustace!"

The game-keeper leaned over the sill and peered down at the faces below. Then he straightened himself up and closed the window with a bang.

"Lord Sandsdowne, who is that?" demanded a certain American Beauty, rushing impetuously up to the Marquis, who was looking rather dazed, with his cousin Edith on his arm.

"That's my keeper, John Brett," he responded, stupidly. "What—"

But the American Beauty's mamma grabbed her by the arm and led her away. Her father assisted in the process, whistling a popular American ditty the while in an abstracted sort of way. "You little ninny," admonished the American Beauty's mamma, as she led her half-fainting offspring on toward the manor, "do you want to ruin your chances with the Marquis?"

CHAPTER III.

The Marquis of Sansdowne was seated in his library the following morning, smoking a very democratic short clay pipe, when his assistant game-keeper entered. The young man was very pale. He wore his long ulster and carried a valise in his hand. "Your lord-

"I AM GOING AWAY AT ONCE."

ship," he said, "I wish to resign. I am going away at once."

For answer the Marquis arose, grasped both his visitor's hands, looked him straight in the eyes and emitted a leonine roar of laughter. Then he abruptly left the room.

In about ten seconds Mildred Van Arman entered, looking very stern, but with her hazel eyes a-twinkle.

Five minutes later Eustace had told her of his overhearing the fatal words that proved to him her inconstancy. When her laughter had subsided she ejaculated with much difficulty: "O, you prince of all stupids! when you overheard me I was waiting for you. *You heard me talking to my parrot!*"

At that instant the Christmas chimes from the village church a mile away rang out like mad. And so it came to pass that one American heiress was lost to the European aristocracy.

HAROLD R. VYNNE.

—A fond father said to his three-year-old boy the other day: "Well, Willie, what are you going to give me at Christmas?" Replied the youngster, promptly: "I ain't Santa Claus."—Boot and Shoe Recorder.

THE NOBLE RED MAN.

A Reported Battle Between the Hostiles and Troops—Particulars of the Killing of Sitting Bull.

DENVER, Col., Dec. 17.—A News courier from a camp near Daly's ranch has the following from Rapid City, Dak.: "A rancher just arrived in great haste to our commanding officer reports a command of cavalry attacked and two officers and fifty men killed, but the Indians were repulsed with heavy losses. The number of Indians killed is not known. The Indians were put to rout. This report is probably correct. It is not known whose command it was.

THE KILLING OF SITTING BULL.

STANDING ROCK AGENCY, S. D., Dec. 17.—"God Almighty made me. God Almighty did not make me an agency Indian, and I'll fight and die fighting before any white man can make me an agency Indian." This is the declaration made by Sitting Bull to General Miles, and the detailed reports of the medicine man's fight give to the declaration the full force of a prophecy.

That the Government authorities preferred the death of the savage to his capture whole skinned few persons here, Indian or white, have a doubt. It was felt that Sitting Bull's presence anywhere behind iron bars would be the cause of endless troubles, while, should he fall a victim to the Winchester, the thousands of Messiah crazed ghost dancers would rudely realize that his "medicine," which was to make them bullet proof and yet could not save so great an oracle, must be worthless.

The expedition which started from this agency for Sitting Bull's lonely camp, forty miles distant, to take him dead or alive, was, there is every reason to believe, a carefully planned military maneuver, originating with General Miles, sanctioned in the War Department at Washington and authorized before President Harrison's Cabinet. When General Miles left Chicago the expedition which had been under preparation at Fort Yates was also ready to move. Almost at the moment that General Miles' car left for the Northwest, the members of the little command here took their departure toward the camp of Sitting Bull on the banks of the Grand river. The band was led by Sitting Bull's own blood, and was superbly mounted and accoutred.

Close behind the blue coated Indian horsemen's hardy ponies, but taking a slower pace on the frozen trail, went Captain Fechet's cavalry command, who were incumbered with two machine guns. To the rear of Fechet's cavalry was the infantry command of Colonel Drum.

The distance and the capabilities of the troops to withstand the fatigues of such a journey had been figured out to a nicety and when the first faint light of dawn appeared the expedition was within easy distance of its destination. The broken order of triple separation of forces had been carefully preserved and the Indian police were the first to sight the cluster of tepees on the river bank. Despite the early hour all was astir in the village, where, on every hand, was evidence that a hurried exodus was contemplated. The ponies of the police were pushed now for all they were worth, and before Sitting Bull's adherents had half a chance to realize the situation a dozen of the police had pulled their panting animals up short on all sides of the chief's abode and he was hustled out, hoisted on a waiting pony and in a trice faced toward civilization. He raged and sputtered for a moment, then straightening up shouted hoarsely a command to his followers. Despite the threatening of the police Winchesters, alternately directed at his head and those of his kinsmen, he retained his presence of mind and with powerful voice continued to direct his own rescue.

Suddenly there was a puff of smoke beside a tepee and the sharp crack of a Winchester. The policeman at Sitting Bull's right grasping the chief's bridle, reeled in the saddle and toppling over was trampled under the hoofs of the ponies now all in the mad retreat from the village.

The shot was instantly answered by a volley from the police at their blanketed tribesmen, many of whom were already mounted and in frenzied pursuit. The police volley told with deadly effect and the firing in a moment was general on both sides.

Sitting Bull could be heard in the confusion still attempting, though captive, to direct the fight. Raising his gaunt form he was beckoning his son and warriors on, when, whithout warning, his body straightened rigidly and then dropped limp on the hard prairie.

The police halted round the corpse, not knowing for a moment but it was a trick of the wily old chief. The sudden movement and the fall of Sitting Bull disconcerted the pursuers, who remained at a distance firing at intervals toward the police. The latter held their ground knowing the cavalry under Captain Fechet would soon be at hand.

To the surprise of all, however, the hostiles, who had been consulting among themselves, began a movement to close in from all sides. The rattle of Winchesters was now redoubled from both parties, the police using their ponies as protection.

It was at this critical juncture that Captain Fetchet's men dashed up and the Gatling gun was put in position and opened up on the redskins. The latter were unable at this unexpected onslaught to stand even for a moment and all bolted for the river. The cavalry followed only a short distance, deeming it better policy not to drive to desperation the now leaderless mob.